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National Park Service
Yosemite National Park
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, California 95389

MAR 30 2021

In Reply Refer To
10.D (YOSE-VRP)

pagoston@prioryca.org

Dear Mr. Agoston:

Thank you for your letter and continued interest in visiting and enjoying the Yosemite wilderness. The primary goal of our wilderness permit system is two-fold: to manage visitation while preserving wilderness character and to ensure that wilderness visitors understand and follow best practices to leave the wilderness unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

As with most aspects of life during the pandemic, we had to modify our wilderness permit processes in 2020 to provide for visitor and employee safety while following guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), our state health authorities, and our local health officers.

In 2020 we temporarily modified our wilderness permit system to eliminate all walk-up permits, which represented 40% of all the available permits. This modification was necessary to prevent long lines of people and to protect all parties involved from spreading disease. Instead, this block of permits was made available online by lottery 14 days in advance. Additionally, we substituted virtual wilderness permit briefings with a ranger instead of the formerly required in-person briefings. This allowed us to share the information with visitors that is vital to protecting wilderness character while still respecting the need for visitor and employee safety.

Our wilderness permit process has not yet been finalized for the 2021 season, but 60% of all Yosemite wilderness permits are available right now by reservation six months in advance by lottery as has been the standard since well before the pandemic. For our 40% walk-up allocation (which begins in mid-April), our wilderness permit system will likely continue to operate as we did in 2020 with these permits being available by lottery 14 days in advance. We are still considering additional changes to improve permit issuance and to address some of your concerns. In any case, the 40% walk-up quota will be available to the public as it always has been, but it likely will not be available in person as a first come first served opportunity.

Based on current reservation trends we expect unprecedented interest in visiting the wilderness this season. This desire is stronger than ever, and we recognize that we must continue to adapt to meet those challenges. We appreciate that no permit system is perfect and welcome your comments as we continue to consider how we can adjust our wilderness management practices for 2021 and beyond.

Thank you again for your letter and for your continued interest in the stewardship of the Yosemite wilderness.

Sincerely,



Cicely Muldoon
Superintendent